

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

AID-05 EB-04 /074 W

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O R 152051Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8844

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 8393

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJ: LOPEZ REGA DEPARTS ARGENTINA SUDDENLY

1. AT 1:00 PM YESTERDAY, NOV 14, A GOA PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THAT SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER LOPEZ REGA HAD DEPARTED FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AT 8:00 AM THAT MORNING ON AN OFFICIAL MISSION AT THE "REQUEST OF PRESIDENT PERON". FURTHER NEWS ACCOUNTS INDICATE THAT LOPEZ REGA, UNDER WHAT WERE CALLED "VERY HEAVY SECURITY PRECAUTIONS", WENT BY HELICOPTER TO EZEIZA AIRPORT TO BOARD AN ARGENTINE AIR FORCE PLANE PRESUMABLY TAKING HIM TO THE MIDDLE EAST. SOME PRESS REPORTS SAID THAT THE FLIGHT WULD STOP IN ROME AND MADRID FIRST, BEFORE GOING ON TO MIDDLE EAST. APPROXIMATELY FORTY OFFICIALS ARE REPORTED TO HAVE ACCOMPANIED LOPEZ REGA, THOUGH NO HIGH-RANKING OFFICIALS AT THE MIN OF SOCIAL WELFARE WERE ON THE PLANE.

2. LATE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, MIN OF INTERIOR ROCAMORA WAS ASKED BY NEWSMEN THE PURPOSE OF LOPEZ REGAS TRIP. ROCAMORE REPORTED THAT LOPEZ REGA WAS ON A "COMMERCIAL MISSION" AT THE
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EXPRESS REQUEST OF MRS. PERON. ASKED IF HE OR OTHER MEMBERS OF

THE CABINET HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY INFORMED OF THE TRIP, HE RESPONDED "I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY SO". NEWSMEN THEN DIRECTED THEIR ATTENTION TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRIP GIVEN ABUNDANCE OF RUMORS THAT CABINET CHANGES ARE IMMINENT. ROCAMORA DENIED THAT ANY CHANGES IN THE CABINET WERE BEING CONTEMPLATED. THEN WITH A SMILE HE ADDED, "OF COURSE I MIGHT BE GONE BY MONDAY".

3. WHILE RUMORS ABOUNDED THIS MORNING AS TO THE "REAL" PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP, NO FIRM EVIDENCE AS TO WHAT LOPEZ REGA WILL BE DOING IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS AVAILABLE. FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS DEPARTURE, MRS. PERON MET WITH EACH MEMBER OF THE CABINET SEPARATELY TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS WITHIN COMPETENCE OF EACH. THIS SERIES OF MEETINGS IMMEDIATELY FUELED SPECULATION THAT CABINET CHANGES, INCLUDING POSSIBLE CHANGE IN WELFARE MINISTERS, MIGHT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS UNABLE AT THIS POINT TO DETERMINE PURPOSE OF LOPEZ REGA'S TRIP OR ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE. WE ARE CONTACTING PERONIST SOURCES TO SEE IF TRIP IS INDEED MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO ENHANCE STATUS OF LOPEZ REGA BY PULLING OFF ANOTHER FOREIGN TRADE COUP IN THE ARAB WORLD OR WHETHER IT IS, IN FACT, RELATED MORE TO LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE.
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